

Simply Chamorro: Telling Tales of Demise and Survival in Guam

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THE "PRECARIOUS CULTURAL POSITION" OF THE CHAMORRO

In 1945 Mavis Warner Van Peenen described the contemporary Chamorro¹ as teetering on what she called a rather "precarious cultural position" (1974, 41). Referring to the Chamorro in the ever-present masculine pronoun, Van Peenen wrote, "He walks the precipitous ledge of Past and Present, with the abyss of 'Americanization' waiting below to engulf him" (41).

From Van Peenen's vantage point as wife of an American naval officer stationed on Guam right before the Japanese invasion in 1941, the precipice on which she saw the Chamorro balanced precariously was composed of a history of Spanish Catholic domination further weakened by the ravages of a recent war and reconstruction efforts on terrain and psyche. Below this ledge gaped an abyss into which the Chamorro was lured by the security of American benevolence and the hold of its material benefits. Radical shifts in Guam's topography and cultural profile in the immediate postwar era, largely in the direction of American militarization and cultural assimilation, signaled, in Van Peenen's view, a virtual end to what she called Chamorro dreams of social independence. In Van Peenen's estimation, such dreams were best illustrated in prewar Chamorro legends and lore. These were stories, for instance, about ancient heroes and heroines (referred to as "Our Before Time People") whose epics were inscribed and memorialized on the land (Gadao's cave, Puntan Patgon, AluPang, Orote Point, Fuuna Rock, to name a few). There were also stories of obligation to ancestral spirits known as *aniti* and *taotaomona* (including protocols of address, for instance, before passing

beyond one's private property and before urinating or defecating). There were also funny tales of island tricksters and pranksters, such as Juan Malo and his faithful carabao, who delighted in fooling Spanish colonial officials and fellow *lancheros* 'ranchers'. There came a point in Chamorro history, wrote Van Peenen, when wit, not arms, had to suffice in the Chamorros' struggle to endure foreign control. In the Juan Malo stories the Chamorro turned inward and laughed at a fledgling colonial presence (Van Peenen 1974, v).

Van Peenen's noble interest in the fate of what she labeled Chamorro "social independence" had less to do with sovereignty than with collecting and preserving what she called the quaint and charming, indeed, primitive, folklore of the Chamorros. She wrote:

When dreams of social independence die, efforts to conserve a folklore die also. There are many reasons why Guam's folklore will disappear. The carabao, that animal so necessary to the island, so symbolic of it, was killed by the Japanese and eaten for food, and soon exterminated. The family and neighborly groups which previously came together for an evening of storytelling and reminiscing now attend the movies. The young people speak English. They are Christians. The pretty Chamorro girls will find husbands among the thousands of American military men on Guam. Many of these girls will leave their Island with their husbands. Many Chamorro boys will join American Armed Forces and 'see the world' and settle in parts far from Guam. The time will come when few remember the stories told of 'Our Before Time Ancestors' and the Chamorro legends, uncollected, unwritten, will be forgotten, one by one. (36-37)

In the face of sure death, Van Peenen the collector, the writer, arrives. Presumably it is through her heroic labor that a memory of Chamorro culture might survive.

Van Peenen's lament on the demise of Chamorro society has kin in a whole parade of foreign observers who wrote before and after her. In 1820 Captain James Burney of the Royal British Navy issued a grand indictment of the Spanish presence in the region when he described events there as "the descending . . . of a plague" that all but exterminated the hapless natives (1967, 293). In the mid 1980s social historians Peter Hempenstall and Noel Rutherford debated what "would . . . seem to be a sorry tale of brutal extermination and demoralization of a mild island people" (1984, 101). Though they concluded there was no official policy of extermina-

tion, they nevertheless declared that among what “failed [the Chamorros] in the end was the absence of a centralized political organization” (102).

Whether in the interest of asserting and justifying British imperialism, of documenting Pacific Island struggles and resistance, or of collecting folklore from waning primitive societies, the theme of the destruction of a proud Chamorro society at the hands of foreign agents and institutions has simply been a foregone conclusion.

Yet Guam’s history does not have to be understood as the definitive Euro-Americanization of the Chamorro people at the tragic expense of indigenous culture. Nor does Chamorro culture need to be understood in terms of an immutably bounded, neatly contained thing that was once upon a time characterized by essential qualities, pure and untainted, as Chamorro culture has (a)historically been conceived and represented.

History and culture—and historiography and ethnography—can be conceptualized in different ways. They can be viewed as contested sites on which identities and communities are built and destroyed, rebuilt and destroyed, in highly charged ways (Clifford 1988, 1992; Haraway 1989; Kaplan and Pease 1993; Neumann 1992; Thomas 1991; Rafael 1988; Hall 1991). One consequence of these critical approaches to historical, cultural, and political studies is a recognition of the partiality of any inquiry, that is, an acknowledgment of an ideological interest that shapes one’s inquiry and narrative as well as a recognition of an incompleteness in the analyses. In this latter sense, “partiality” denotes the fact that there is no omnipotent vantage point from which to pronounce the definitive or whole truth of any human practice or event. One always sees only a slice, at a given time, from a particular vantage point, of a fluid and uncontainable history or cultural practice.

My own collection of partial tales draws from images and anecdotes taken from a variety of documents (written, spoken, visual, aural, and imagined) and from a variety of sources (Chamorro, Spanish, American, religious, secular, athletic, scientific) and from different moments in Guam’s history. These tales are also about colonial and countercolonial desires and anxieties, mine and those of the Chamorros from the island of Guam. In this essay I seek forms of narrating the politics of Guam’s past and present, and especially the story of Chamorro survival that struggles to maintain a certain preeminence over (is)land affairs.

My essay thus draws from tales of multiple origins and uncertain endings. It is motivated by equally uninnocent political and academic clamor-

ing. The essay is structured by Van Peenen's colonial tale of indigenous demise, but it is also energized by the vitality of Chamorro memories, by everyday practices informed by such memories, and finally by the critical practice of "reading against the grain" colonial documents and practices that frame everyday life in Guam. Re-energized, I search for a way to follow the roots and the routes of Chamorro cultural survival at various slices of its history, and at various sites—geographical and cultural—of its expression. My tales build upon the ruins of colonial narratives that come and go. I am compelled thus, for Chamorro culture itself comes and goes with the ebb and flow of colonial currents. Though pushed along, my tales and their contents, however, are not simply adrift but are determined, as they have always been, by the historical desires of a people, by the machinations of their language and customs, by a ferocious bid to maintain and fortify a fierce sense of peoplehood and place. These multiple determinations are best illustrated through moments of cultural recollection and can be extracted from the practices of everyday living on Guam.

STUBBORN CARABAOS AND OTHER TALES

To illustrate the above mouthful, I return to Van Peenen's list of reasons why she believed the Chamorro folk and lore to be headed for extinction. I will resume these peculiar theoretical and intellectual meanderings at the end of this collection of tales, which show how signs of cultural demise can in fact be read to illustrate not death but survival and vitality, indeed, eternal vigilance for future possibilities. In troubled ways.

Van Peenen's first example was the carabao, "that animal so necessary to the island, so symbolic of it." Recall her assertion that the carabao "was killed by the Japanese and eaten for food, and soon exterminated." Reconstituted in the late twentieth century, the case of the exterminated carabao that Van Peenen took as "so symbolic of (the island)" can be renamed the case of the Carabao That Just Wouldn't Go Away.

Tale One: The Carabao That Just Wouldn't Go Away

In the early 1960s Monsignor Oscar Lujan Calvo, DD, better known locally as "Pale Scot" (pronounced "Pah-lee"), received a manuscript written by the late Paul Carano and the late "Doc" Pedro Sanchez. The manuscript, once published, went by the title *A Complete History of Guam*

(1964). No longer in use today, Carano and Sanchez' book enjoys the distinction of being the first attempt to write a modern, comprehensive, chronological narrative of the history of Guam. It is also distinguished, unfortunately, as a remarkably unreflective and Eurocentric piece of historiography.

A Jesuit-educated Chamorro priest, Pale Scot came upon a passage in the draft that referred to the extinction of carabaos on the island. "How can this be?" exclaimed the good priest incredulously (Calvo 1991). In his pastoral rounds in the southern part of the island it was not uncommon for Pale Scot to have to stop on this or that path and wait for resident carabaos to cross. "Are my eyes lying to me?" he asked himself as he read the draft. Just to make sure, Pale Scot phoned the government of Guam's Department of Agriculture and inquired into the status of the island's carabao population. At least several hundred, came the reply over the phone. Pale Scot recalled that the government official had even mentioned that a pair of carabao were shipped to the world-famous San Diego Zoo in order to help bolster that institution's collection of carabao from this part of the world.

The carabao, "that animal so necessary to the island, so symbolic of it," may no longer be the primary means of transportation it once was to the Chamorros, but it has certainly not been exterminated.

A late-twentieth-century telephone call to Dr Jeff Barcinas of the University of Guam's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences elicited this response: "My friend, you want carabao stories? I got plenty of carabao stories. Big, juicy, meaty ones" (Barcinas, pers comm, Mangilão, 23 March 1992). Let us partake some of these juicy, meaty carabao stories hosted by the good Chamorro doctor Barcinas.

First of all, to this day there is a herd of wild carabao roaming the valley known as Bubulao, in the restricted area near the United States Naval Magazine. Dr Jeff speculates that it was the ancestors of this herd that probably obstructed Pale Scot's own flock-tending duties thirty years ago. Dr Jeff was quick to express a kind of gratitude toward the navy insofar as the restricted area it had fenced off in the name of national security also doubled as a place of refuge for this wild herd. Moreover, this herd's existence makes a nearby safari tour even more profitable for the lucrative Japanese tourist market that wants something other than tourist-oriented Tumon Bay, Guam's own Waikiki.

Dr Jeff reflects on the significance of carabao today. Though they are

not the indispensable beasts of burden they were in the prewar years, he insists that they are not forgotten and are in fact cherished as prized possessions for those who own them. And they have not lost their economic value either, says Barcinas, for carabaos are still used for *pugua* 'betel nut' collecting treks into terrain still inaccessible even to today's four-wheelers. Two *pugua*-laden sacks slung on either side of a carabao is still considered an excellent day's work and can bring a small fortune to the laborer. Whether it is sold or given away, nobody can deny the role of *pugua* in the maintenance of everyday Chamorro relations on Guam.

Another favorite carabao pastime features the carabao races held since time immemorial during village *fiestas* 'feasts' in honor of a family's or a village's patron saint. One spin-off of these races, recalls a nostalgic Barcinas, were hilarious baseball games that required a batter to mount a carabao in order to round the bases. Incidentally, in the decisive game of the 1913 "midwinter" baseball league sponsored by the United States Naval Government of (tropical) Guam, an all-native team beat an all-white team called "The Allies" (also once referred to as the "White Hopes") to win the league championship. The native team's name: the Carabaos.

Perhaps the juiciest, meatiest tale of all corroborates Pale Scot's oral history on carabaos. My final question to Dr Jeff was whether in his dealings he had ever heard of carabaos being shipped off to the San Diego Zoo. He laughed and asked if I were kidding. I was, of course, serious. He told me this story. In the late 1970s, as a college student at Cal Poly Pomona, Jeff took a vacation to San Diego with his visiting, elderly parents. They wanted to go to the zoo. Jeff's mother, *Tan* Rita Barcinas, was especially anxious to see if her carabao was still alive. This was how Jeff discovered that when his father was at the Department of Agriculture he had once sent a pair of carabao—the bull belonged to Jeff's family—to zoo officials. In return the elder Barcinas received, and I quote his son here, "two stupid undomesticated wild Anguses" that "I had to feed when I was a kid." The wild, undomesticated cattle are dead now, but they bore offspring that bore offspring, and the Barcinases of Malesso to this day are distinguished islandwide for providing only the freshest, juiciest, and meatiest beef in their village fiestas.

Bistek 'beefsteak' at family and village fiestas and *fandangos* 'parties' does not exhaust the story of the carabao's stubborn presence among the Chamorro people. In another tale, for instance, the kinship between cara-

bao and Chamorro kinship itself is memorialized in *familian Carabao*, the nickname or better-known name of a local Chamorro family. On the playing field, a recent “Miller Football League” contest between the Miller Genuine Draft Bears and the Seven Up Giants pitted two hefty Chamorro gridders, Agustin “Dinga” Quintanilla and Vince Arriola, in their own rendition of a typical “Before Time Ancestors” epic battle. The island shook when these two late-twentieth-century mammoths collided. On the sidelines a fan shrieked *atan na dos carabao!* ‘look at the two carabaos!’ At least that’s how the story is now retold in the vernacular by Dinga, now renamed “Carabao” by his companions, and verified by that fan herself (Leena Perez, pers comm, Mangilão, 1992).

If carabaos were indispensable beasts of burden in the prewar years, images that, in Farrell’s pictorial history of Guam, were “ubiquitous” and “made their way into most early photos” in this era (1986, 80–81), then it would not be too much of a stretch of the imagination to regard today’s pickup truck as the venerable carabao of late-twentieth-century Guam. If a glimpse at virtually any photo of the prewar years would contain a carabao, then a photo of virtually any road or off-the-road scene on Guam today would inevitably capture the equally ubiquitous mechanical beast of burden. Highly prized and equally worked, too, the pickup truck—whether creeping low to the road as a lowrider or reaching high to sky as a monster four-by-four truck—is a cherished possession that not only gets the Chamorro from here to there (on Guam’s roads, that is no small feat), but adds a customized cultural signature as well, as a vessel of cultural and social mobility (see Diaz 1990, 5).

In the prewar years, when the bicycle and the motorized automobile gradually came to displace the carabao on increasingly multiplying concrete pavements, the Chamorro stood and watched and participated in the change of geographical and social terrain. If carabaos are no longer common sights today, they themselves were, once upon a time, items of novelty. Introduced commodities, these new technologies of travel were quickly localized by the Chamorros of yesterday just as the pickup truck has become a common local fixture of today. Working their ways into the heart and soul and stomach of the Chamorro, these affectionate beasts of burden themselves became much loved; indeed, they became viewed as cherished icons of Chamorro identity and possession. Their virtual disappearance could one day mark, too, the virtual disappearance of the Chamorro culture as a whole.

Chamorro participation in the rise and fall of the carabao, to be replaced by automobiles as marked upon the never-ending pavement of Guam's land, was noted by US Navy Captain Edward Dorn, who governed the island from 1908 to 1910. Incidentally, Dorn encouraged off-duty naval personnel to teach sports to the natives as a way to Americanize them. In his time baseball was formally organized, though there had been occasional games among military personnel since October 1899. Physical exercise, wrote one journalist, was "so necessary for Americans in the Tropics" (*GN* 1912*b*, 5). Later, the navy would allow participation by natives who had until then been kept behind the fences or staked and roped off the playing fields, watching with great curiosity and enthusiasm. By 1908 select Chamorro men were permitted to show their stuff; by 1913 the second of two "Native" teams—the Carabaos—had taken the championship. In July 1912 Naval Governor Robert Coontz (1912–1913) opened his Fourth of July address by noting that the "greatest of all holidays . . . the day that stirs the blood" is begun "in faraway Guam . . . with twelve hours of sport and pleasure" (*GN* 1912*a*, 6). By the second decade of American rule, sports had already become an integral part of the navy's effort at the "benevolent" assimilation of the Chamorro (Bordallo 1982, 45).

Sports in this colonial context not only signified a healthy white body that feared degeneration way out in the tropics, it also furnished the colonial administration with a novel way to inculcate values such as respect for authority, discipline, obedience to rules, and, of course, the value of physical activity to complement intellectual work, things that were presumed to be antithetical to native sensibilities. There was added value too, for a physically worn-out native body would be less inclined to grow restless and, thus, dangerous. Better to hurl baseballs than rocks.

The increasing number of bicycles and automobiles and the ever-increasing system of roads on Guam were part of a colonial contest on Guam that featured practices such as baseball. In the colonial game, Captain Dorn commented on the relationship between the newly paved roads and the economic prosperity that would occur with the new ability to move goods and services from source to markets. However, Dorn lamented that these particular tenets of civilization (unlike those of baseball) appeared lost to the native. He wrote, "To the average native who is of a simple and pleasure-loving disposition, this road represents merely an easier and more direct way of passing from town to town to his fiestas and fandagos" (in Farrell 1986, 137). While the governor betrays the suprema-

cist and condescending attitudes toward the Chamorro people that informed American benevolence in the colony, he unwittingly reveals the governing code by which the natives would embrace new technologies of change. The road and the new carabao for which it was built—the automobile—would replace the carabao’s privileged position as a mode of travel to Chamorro pastimes—religious and cultural celebrations. Roads and, later, cars, as American lessons of economic prosperity, markets, and capital, would themselves become virtual but also troubled vehicles for “easier and more direct ways” of exercising what was of local importance. Once upon a time it was islandwide travel to fiestas and fandangos; today the field of travel is bigger. The carabao—once known for its “practically non-existent velocity” (Gibson 1973, 10)—has been replaced by the modern beast of burden called the pickup truck, that newest customized set of local identity that creeps low to the ground or reaches high to the sky.

There is one particular “pickup truck” whose customized style and utilitarian function recalls the chronological and vertical mobility of Chamorro culture today: the Bank of Guam armored truck bears, appropriately enough, the institution’s logo, whose prominent feature is the carabao. If the carabaos of yesterday represented the cultural and material wealth of their owners, their appropriation today by the “people’s bank”—the first Chamorro-owned and operated financial institution—similarly illustrates the wealth of the Chamorro community in the late twentieth century.

Whether built close to the ground or reaching high in the sky, carabaos and pickup trucks—lowriders, four-by-fours, and armored trucks—are artifacts of a precarious balancing act that is Chamorro cultural survival. They are forms of expressing the pleasures and desires in the historical and cultural meandering of Chamorro identity.

Tale Two: Moving Island Images

“The family and neighborly groups which previously came together for an evening of storytelling and reminiscing now attend the movies.”

The first motion picture shown on Guam came under the administration of the aforementioned Governor Coontz (Carano and Sanchez 1964, 213–214). Carano and Sanchez’s *A Complete History of Guam* also offers an anecdote: One of the first motion pictures shown about this time featured a roaring train that, at one point in the movie, appeared headed straight for the camera and the audience. In a tale that I’ve heard take

place in many other places (and for this reason I don't really believe it actually took place at all), the image of the approaching train frightened all but the most courageous natives in the house, sending them scrambling outside.

True or not, movies, especially in the late prewar days, were intensely popular pastimes of leisure, if not powerful vehicles in the socialization and Americanization of the Chamorro people. "My father loved the movies," recalls Martha Duenas, whose father was among the thousand or so young men who joined the navy to see the world before December 8, 1941 (Pers comm, Santa Cruz, CA, 25 Nov 1990). Though Juan B. Duenas returned with American forces in July of 1944 to help recapture his island from the Japanese, he and his family lived most of their lives stateside. Did the movies that Juan Duenas loved so much as a youth play a part in his decision to raise his family in the states? What was this love affair between Chamorros like Mr. Duenas (who still resides in a place called, ironically enough, "Leisure World" in Seal Beach, California) and the motion pictures brought by military personnel who needed activities such as these and baseball (to keep them what, civilized, way out here in the tropics?)? What, precisely, did Chamorros do with the moving images from the bigger world beyond the confines of their homes and ranches? What movies were brought in? Who got to watch? Who didn't? Just what, exactly, did they show, and what was seen?

How were movies used? The title of one movie functioned as a code word that probably saved the life of at least one Chamorro and his family. During the Japanese occupation, Mr. Tomas Tanaka was tending his store in Agaña when Mr. Jake Calvo walked in. Calvo waited for Tanaka to finish tending to his customers when he winked and said, "So, *Destry* rides again, huh?" Tanaka was shocked. The movie *Destry Rides Again* had just been shown in Agaña, but Calvo was referring cryptically to his knowledge that Tanaka was harboring George Tweed, the last American fugitive hiding out from the Japanese, over whose capture many Chamorros were being beaten and killed. In his book *Robinson Crusoe, U.S.N.*, Tweed recalls that Tanaka hurried back to him and told him he had to leave Tanaka's premises (1954, 133). "Calvo runs around with a group of fellows," Tanaka told Tweed, "and if Jake knows, they know." Tweed's book is a narrative of his heroic survival as assisted by loyal Chamorro heroes and heroines such as Tun Antonio Artero, to name just one person, who risked their lives to assist the American. It is also a narrative

about other Chamorros who, according to Tweed, had big mouths and couldn't keep secrets. Pale Scot was so angry at what Tweed said about the Chamorros in his book that he organized the first public protest and demonstration on the island when Tweed returned for a visit right after the war.

Island images in motion. Why must Chamorro culture be seen as necessarily at odds with things like movies? What notions of culture prevail that make them mutually exclusive? Why aren't there Chamorro movies? Are we sure there aren't? If we took video technology as a kind of film, for instance, is it not possible that a whole genre of Chamorro "films" have emerged in the form of home videos? How many of us have family videos of funerals, weddings, christenings, or little league baseball games? Of kids playing? Of parents talking and laughing?

As soon as security permitted, during the bloody recapture of Guam in 1944, Pale Scot requested and was granted permission to hold a Thanksgiving mass in celebration of the return of the Americans and the survival of the Chamorro people during the hardships of the Japanese occupation. After mass, war correspondent Alvin Josephy appeared with news photographers to take pictures of the people. Josephy observed: "The young barefoot girls saw (the photographers) and scampered back into their huts. A few moments later they reappeared with their long tresses combed and filled with flowers and ribbons" (1946, 88).

This turn of events caused some commotion and consternation among the war correspondents. War correspondence and photography chronicle the national pride of victory, the agony of defeat. One photographer turned to a Chamorro and asked: "What's the idea? We came to take pictures of refugees, and they doll themselves up." With a grin, the Chamorro answered: "They think some movie scout may see the pictures. . . . They all want to go to Hollywood."

The prewar Chamorro fascination with Hollywood and postwar possibilities of stardom, fame, and glamor frustrated the conventions of war correspondence and its graphic role in inscribing heroic narratives of national history. There would be no image of war-torn refugees liberated by American freedom fighters in this particular encounter.

Incidentally, at about the very same moment as the photographers' images were being frustrated by refugees who refused to pose as hapless victims, Dr Jeff Barcinas' uncle and another companion had just subdued several Japanese soldiers and paddled out on their canoes to an American

ship anchored just off a southern reef. When the Chamorros were brought before the ship's captain, they thanked him and the Americans profusely for returning to liberate the islanders. The captain's answer: "Liberate? We are here to flatten the rock" (Barcinas, pers comm, Mangilão, 23 March 1992).

The "liberation" of the Chamorros by the Americans is memorialized annually by the island community. An annual parade marches down "Marine Drive" and features the usual icons of Guam's military past and present. Solemn-looking soldiers and their armored vehicles retrace the steps of US marines who marched northward in the successful effort to recapture this island from the Japanese in July of 1944. Marine Drive, the island's main thoroughfare, was named in honor of these marines.

Accompanying the parades, in the island's airwaves, are other rituals of commentary in the form of videos that memorialize the lessons of World War II on Guam. *Liberation Day 40* and *Man Libre* are two documentaries that combine oral histories of Chamorro survivors with United States marine and navy footage of the battle for Guam (Donner *nda*, *ndb*). The videos are both cosponsored by the none other than the Bank of Guam.

Interestingly enough, the documentaries themselves rely on important prewar footage of Guam taken from the home movies of the Felix Torres and Joaquin Sablan families—two among the more prominent Chamorro families (Laura M. Souder, pers comm, 20 April 1993). Without these "Chamorro (home) movies," the documentaries would be merely a dubbing of military images and present-day interviews. With these images, they are more. With images of prewar civil life, war footage, and emotional present-day testimonies of Chamorro survivors, the videos wax nostalgic with a particular moralization of the war's experience. The dubbed images and moving oral testimonies of survival construct a particular interpretation of America's return: the "liberation" of the people is met with the people's gratitude, which is taken as an irrefutable sign of American patriotism. But not all Chamorros (like that US Navy captain who responded to the grateful but mistaken Chamorros who climbed aboard his ship fifty years ago) equate America's bombardment of and return to Guam as liberating (Santos 1991; Hale-Ta 1993). Since 1992, July 21 is also celebrated by at least one vocal and active Chamorro community—the Chamoru Nation—not as the anniversary of the island's liberation but as the anniversary of its "reoccupation" by returning colonial forces.

Tale Three: English the Chamorro Way

Van Peenen's third reason for the inevitable demise of Chamorro folk and lore was that "the young people speak English." My title for tale number three is pilfered directly, verbatim, from the title of a local popular publication called *English—the Chamorro Way* (1987).

The relationship between the English language and the Chamorro people has roots before the American takeover of Guam in 1898. Indeed, that very history was explained to befuddled American sailors and one Oscar King Davis, a special correspondent for the *New York Sun*, who traveled to the Far East with the "Army of Occupation" from May to December 1898 (Davis 1898). At what is now called Apra Harbor, the boat that carried Davis and the American occupation forces was guided into berth by young Chamorro boys from the village of Sumay. Davis recalls this particular first encounter: one Chamorro "came straight out to the boat and said 'Good morning' in English, with a grin that showed a double row of betel-stained teeth. Everybody in the boat replied 'good morning', though they were too much astonished at his use of English to say more at first. Then someone said 'Where is the Channel.' The young Chamorro grinned and replied 'Here. Plenty water' " (78). The young Chamorro was soon joined by others, also speaking English, who together guided the boat safely. They then took Davis and others on a tour of the village. In Sumay, Davis was introduced to brothers Vicente and Nicolas Diaz who said, in English, that in spite of their names they are full-blooded Chamorros. Davis again: "These Diazes speak the best English in the village, and they explained how it is that every able bodied man in Sumay can understand and make himself understood in that tongue. They do it with the single word: 'Whaler.' They go on to say that for many years it has been the custom of whalers to come to Guam to get oarsmen. Along the beach in front of Sumay there are a score or more of fine whaleboats" (82).

Davis is just one among a host of journalists who stepped forward to chronicle for national audiences back in the United States the ups and downs of American troops overseas, the so-called experiment in American imperialism. They also provided much-needed and much-wanted information about America's new possessions and their inhabitants. Davis continues his observations of skilled natives in Sumay: "On the whalers the Chamorros learn to speak English more or less well. The Diaz brothers

began that way and have kept it up by practice with the whalers, who have come to Guam. Since then they became sufficiently far advanced in property to quit such service. Now they trade with whalers and sell them pineapples, bananas, coconuts, limes and such things" (82).

Davis's observations of the Diaz brothers provide a hint of some of the historical and cultural stakes involved in the early use of English for enterprising Chamorros. Despite the messy entanglement of capital and local, political and economic traditions, the use of the English or any language other than one's own native tongue does not necessarily constitute the demise of the mother tongue. The history of English usage on Guam, to be sure, must take into account the ongoing colonial legacy under which it and all other non-Chamorro languages have arrived and made a home. English under naval administration was in fact made mandatory at the expense of the local vernacular. The "English only" policies of the US naval government played the key role in the devaluation of the Chamorro language and in making a generation of Chamorros who would abandon their own language, looking down on it as an expression of backwardness. This devaluation and negation continues to this day when the speaking of English occurs at the expense of the vernacular.

But English—the Chamorro way, that is, the speaking of English with the particularities of Chamorro inflections, glosses, accentuations, and so on, the speaking of English as filtered through the play of the indigenous vernacular, also describes histories that exceed official naval and civil requirements and mandates. These histories are embedded in discursive practices that always, always betray a memory of the violence of an ongoing colonial past but a vigilance for new futures, for the new possibilities, in ways that contest prevailing rules. These indigenous, discursive archives-cum-beacons, signposts, will always embody the messy entanglements of colonial pasts and presents, as seen in two anecdotes taken from the *Guam Recorder* in the mid-1920s. The *Guam Recorder* was the organ of expression for America's colonial presence among the Chamorros before World War II. The first anecdote is an extract from an article titled "Cross Section of a Typical Hearing Before the Chief of Police" (GR 1925, 42–43). Here is an example of a typical hearing:

The Chief of Police (questioning a native charged with disturbing the peace):

"Do you speak English?"

Native: "Yes Sir."

Chief of Police: "What's the matter with you? Can't you behave yourself?"

Native: "No Sir."

Chief of Police: "What?"

Native: "No Sir."

Chief of Police: "Why can't you behave yourself?"

Native: "Yes Sir. I no understand very well what you are making me tell."

There is anxious humor in the entanglement of English and the white law: It is funny that the native doesn't really speak English after all. Yet, it is possible that the native in fact speaks English very well but plays the fool to get off free from the charge of disturbing the colony's peace. Incidentally, "public whistling" and the ringing of church bells to begin spiritual and temporal obligations at 4:00 AM were among the island practices once prohibited by a naval governor precisely because they disturbed the peace.

The second example of the colonial imperative around the English language is a set of jokes submitted for publication to the *Guam Recorder* (Mendiola 1925). These jokes were submitted by a certain Jose A. Mendiola in his bid to distinguish himself from other presumably ignorant and troublemaking Chamorros. In one joke, Mendiola distinguishes himself precisely as a literate native, and a clever one at that:

Teacher: "Peter, give me a sentence."

Peter: (thinking) "I is . . ."

Teacher: (interrupting) "You mean 'I *am* . . .'"

Peter: "I am the ninth letter of the alphabet." (45)

Note the anglicization of the name Pedro, which is itself the hispanicization and Christianization of native names. In the humor of this exchange, the protagonist Peter proceeds with his complete, grammatically correct sentence, thereby not only revealing native skill in the colonizer's language—in the realm of the joke and in the realm of Jose Mendiola's own social text—but also mocking the colonial official's (the teacher's) presumption of native ignorance.

Even Van Peenen unwittingly takes stock of local histories of English. In a subsection titled "The Influence of English upon the Chamorro Language" (37), Van Peenen provides an anecdote that goes against the grain of her narrative containment, revealing not the influence of English on the Chamorro language but the influence of the Chamorro language on English and Spanish, as articulated by an anonymous native Chamorro girl. Before she left Guam in October 1941 Van Peenen chanced upon two

Spanish priests playing tennis in Agaña. At that moment a young Chamorro girl happened by and inquired, "*Pale, haye kekeep score?*" 'Father who is keeping score?' Van Peenen rightly notes the simple phrase's historical complexity "right down," she says, "to the year 1941," although she misunderstands this history. She explains: " 'Pale' the Chamorro adaptation of the Spanish word 'Padre'; 'haye', a pure Chamorro interrogative pronoun meaning 'who?'; 'kekeep', an English word but the first syllable reduplicated in the Chamorro manner to show tense, and finally, the word 'score' a pure English word" (38).

To be sure, this anecdote of discursive and linguistic play about play in Agaña reveals an ongoing history. Against perceived notions of the purity of language or culture as noted by Van Peenen, however, this anecdote asserts not the ensuing demise of the Chamorro language, but its durability and tenacity in the colonial entanglements. Van Peenen should have called her section "How Chamorro people and the Chamorro language make Spanish and English work for their purposes," for it describes as much a process of Chamorro influence on how Spanish and English are used on Guam as on the "impact" of these languages—for better or for worse—on a passive people. Social practices and discourse around practices—even in trivial events such as playing tennis and asking scores—refract deep political histories. But for Spanish and American imperialism could two Spanish padres be caught playing tennis by an American naval wife on the island of Guam.

From Van Peenen's vantage point, this anecdote contains the essential truths of colonial history and indigenous demise, "right down," she said, "to the year 1941." The utterance "*Pale, haye kekeep score*" reveals a chronological colonial history in which Chamorro language (and culture) was passing from its purer forms, through hybridity with Spanish and English forms, to its present day "pure" English form as symbolized by the final term, "score." When Van Peenen says "pure," she is referring not to how the term "score" is spared from being reconfigured, influenced by the vernacular, but to the term's supposed "authenticity" as an English word. Thus, she was able to read this anecdote as an instance of outside influence upon the Chamorro language.

The idea of a historical passing (away) that Van Peenen saw in this Chamorro utterance is also precisely what inspired her to collect what she erroneously perceived to be a vanishing corpus of Chamorro folklore. Vanishing folk and lore. This idea was one of the reasons why she pointed

to the increasing use of English as a sign of the demise of the Chamorro people.

The simple but complicated question “*haye kekeep score?*” can be repeated today in the spirit of re-presenting both the Chamorro past and the Chamorro present. An anonymous Chamorro girl’s interrogation in 1941 can be reinterpreted as an utterance of persistence and resistance rather than one of demise. It reveals a political history of the subject-(if)ication of English and Spanish terms by Chamorro linguistic rules, drawing from the specific materiality found in the twilight of World War II in Guam. It begins by addressing the priest properly, that is, in his vernacular as well as with the appropriate title, “padre,” but through the flicking of a Chamorro tongue (*pale*). It pauses and then continues in Chamorro with its own interrogative pronoun *haye* ‘who’ and then taps into the English term “keep,” subjected, however, to a persistent Chamorro rule of reduplication for what is grammatically called the “present tense” (*ke-keep*). The utterance ends with the *unadulterated* (vs “pure”) English word “score.” In its procedure, the utterance illustrates the persistence of the Chamorro language, especially as it subjects *remnants* of Spanish and American colonialism. At this time America had already abandoned Guam to an imminent Japanese invasion (Maga 1988; Farrell 1991); indeed, the supposed “liberation” of the Chamorros three years later was only America’s return with a vengeance. This vengeful act was directed at Japan, but it was also aimed at establishing a huge forward base and depot from which to carry out America’s military operations in the Far East. The massive destruction of Guam by American bombardment and immediate postwar base construction would profoundly alter not only the remaining topography and cartography of Chamorro culture as it withstood three centuries of Spanish colonization; it would also radically transform the culture of the topography and the cartography of the land itself.

The utterance of 1941 is more than an instance of a prewar Chamorro discursive maneuver, an operation on the remnants of Spanish and American language and colonialism on Guam. It also provides a contemporary political commentary: whose frame of reference will prevail—who gets to keep score in the contest that features Spanish *padres* playing an American sport in the land of the Chamorros? Though it traffics in other languages, this interrogation insists on Chamorro conventions of discourse. “Pale, haye kekeep score” interrogates the priest through the discursive subjecti-

fication of Spanish and English terms in an insistence to know who is keeping score in 1941. In the form recollected by Van Peenen in 1941, the Chamorro language is still keeping score.

The vernacular's historical struggle with the colonial vernaculars of Castilian and what is sometimes referred to as "standard American English" continues today in the office of the Guam *Kumision i Fino Chamorro*, or the Chamorro Language Commission. The Kumision is charged with developing a standard orthography as well as with establishing a standard grammar. As one might imagine, there are as many variants and dialects as there are islands and regions and families who speak the "Chamorro" language. Persistent and ferocious as it has been, Fino Chamorro is not simply one language. Non-Chamorro speakers and so-called historical experts privately ridicule the attempt by the Kumision to standardize a language whose only written rules and grammars were provided by Spanish missionaries and other non-Chamorro linguists. Some Chamorros resist the changes as foreign to their own understanding, though there are also those who defer to the Kumision. The Kumision is composed entirely of native Chamorros (from Guam) who are recognized—some academically, some by the Chamorro-speaking community—as experts in Chamorro culture and language. Though the problems with standardizing any language are immense, it is important to underscore the significance of the Kumision's work. Established amidst a history of colonial encroachment by other vernaculars and practices, the Kumision remains an undeniable site of Chamorro durability and survival. As Andersen shows, the attempt to standardize a vernacular, to elevate any one over any others, must be understood as an integral part of the historical formation of that imagined community called the nation (1983). Language commissions and the historical construction of a people go hand in hand.

The simple question "*Pale, haye kekeep score?*" is a veritable slogan. Whether in 1941 or in 1993, the slogan leads in the direction of other associated interrogations, other "tallies" of sorts: How does the Chamorro language fare in its historical usage of English? Is it losing the contest? And where it is true that there is now a generation of Chamorros who have learned English at the expense of their native tongue, is the "ball game" of the Chamorro language (to keep that sports metaphor going) all over? And who, in the spirit of this inquisitive Chamorro girl in 1941, is "*kekeeping*" score? In the present tense. In 1941 and in 1993, the practice of

historical narration is not finished. The story of Chamorro culture is not to be spoken about in the past tense.

There are many postwar Chamorro parents who today regret their decisions not to teach their children the Chamorro language. The perennial parental desire to see one's child progress farther than one was able to oneself was expressed on Guam after the war by encouraging a command of the English language at the expense of the vernacular. This generation of parents, as children in the prewar years, was indoctrinated by lessons of the cultural superiority of America and the command of English as the primary vehicle to participate in that greatness. If English was the ticket to all the benefits that civilization has to offer, Chamorro was the passage to all that was opposite. The Chamorro language would come to be viewed as an impediment to individual and island development. That generation of Chamorros would decide not to teach their children the vernacular so that the children could get further ahead in life than they had been able to. What stifled that generation of Chamorro parents and grandparents, in fact, was not their indigenous language, but stifling and condescending naval policies.

Though many in my generation are not fluent, the Chamorros are also in the midst of a revival, a concerted effort to design Chamorro cultural projects that dare compete with MTV and video games for the next generation's attention. Some children are slowly gaining a fluency in the language (as well as a proficiency in video-game technology—the adults are way behind here). Indeed, a generation of children who did not speak their native tongues does not necessarily mean that their own children won't know how.

Tale Four: Repositioning the Missionary

The fourth reason Van Peenen cites for the demise of Chamorro folklore is that "Chamorros are Christians." The history of the Spanish Catholic mission among the Chamorro people occupies a central role in the historiography of Guam. In that writing, the story of the arrival and adventures of the padres effectively structures the longer history of relations between the Chamorros and colonial ventures by the United States from 1898 to the present, including a brief and brutal interruption by Japanese occupation during World War II. Emplotted through the story of the Catholic mission in the seventeenth century, the traditional (Spanish) and modern (American) history of the island is structured in terms of an opposition between a

romantic, heroic celebration of the arrival of the West, on the one hand, and the bereavement of its tragic effects, on the other. On the one hand, the arrival of Spain and then America signaled but the beginnings of historical and cultural progress and civilization; on the other hand, it was the worst thing that ever happened to the Chamorros.

Though they are oppositional, these two narratives are two sides of a coin whose value, as it were, comes at the systematic expense of Chamorro "agency" in history. For better or for worse, the story is about the Euroamericanization of a passive, hapless people. For Spanish Catholic historians and their sympathizers, the story is about the heroic effort to convert the Chamorro heathens; for others, notably French, British, and American secular historians (whose narratives were no less complicit in their own nations' colonial conquests in other parts of the Pacific than were the Spanish missionaries' narratives), the story had been about the tragic destruction of an innocent and helpless island people. In the past tense.

Against this canonical understanding I have argued for the need to rethink such narrow determinations and emplotments, to shift the focus to the processes of mutual but unequal appropriations that exist between colonizer and colonized, indeed among a multilayered and restless colonized population itself (Diaz 1989, 1993). This mucky history is illustrated, among other ways, in a twentieth-century revival of a historic effort to canonize Blessed Diego Luis de Sanvitores, the seventeenth-century Spanish Jesuit who was martyred in the act of establishing the Catholic mission among the Chamorros (Ledesma 1981). I have attempted to reposition the mission story as it is embodied in the historic and contemporary effort to canonize Sanvitores (Diaz 1992). Beatified by Rome in 1985, the now "Blessed" Diego is at the penultimate step toward full sainthood. Attention to the cultural and political stakes in the historical proceedings elucidates how the official canonization effort "works" the native to produce a saint insofar as the crafting of heroic narratives of salvation are performed at the expense of indigenous cultural and historical orders of difference. Yet, the native can also be shown to "rework" the saint to produce what can be called new canons of "indigenous" selves, new narratives that often tend to disrupt extant notions—whether colonial or anti-colonial. Within a deep and ongoing colonial and "postcolonial" legacy (if I may use such a term in this American territory), local investment in the making of a saint as well as participation in a wider array of Catholic

practices and rituals have become powerful and troubled forms of native survival and political expression. At stake are the formation and re-formation of indigenous as well as exogenous cultural identities. Chamorro spirituality and its temporal and political benefits, now expressed in Catholic practices such as novenas, fiestas, and rosaries, are celebrated vicariously through the elevation of Sanvitores to the highest honors of the altar. But not without local contestation.

If the elevation of Sanvitores' singular story would elevate, too, the cause of Chamorro cultural survival and revival, then Spanish Catholicism can be deemed a virtual Chamorro domain, a kind of surrogate cultural space. As many others have argued, Christianity—Roman Catholic or other—can be seen not simply as the mark of indigenous death, but as a marker of all kinds of possibilities and limits (Rafael 1988; Hanlon 1988; Taussig 1987).

The theme of Chamorro continuity in Christianity is found in the words of the anthropologist Laura Thompson, another American woman, who visited Guam a few years before Van Peenen. In her portrayal of prewar Guam, Thompson provided this impression: "In the shadows of the early evening moves the cassocked figure of a priest, and a child runs toward him, stoops to kiss his hand. A dog barks and in the distance sounds the chant of a novena, primitive as a Chamorro folksong echoing through the ages" (1947, 5). One can imagine the chaos for spiffy white American naval officers in prewar Guam faced with "primitive" chants piggybacking on Catholic novenas through the barking of dogs. At 4:00 AM.

Even Van Peenen describes a history of conversion other than that which foresees the demise of indigenous folklore. Her observation on this particular facet of folk and lore, however, is structured in a schizophrenic narrative that cannot decide once and for all who are the subjects and the objects of historical and cultural agency. First, she writes, it is the Chamorros who "did not completely abandon their own religious past" but instead took up the new religion "according to the infantile manner of primitive people" (32). They were "charmed," she wrote, especially with the wood and ivory images of the church. If they get to have agency, it is a primitive, infantile one that is short-lived anyway, in the consciousness of the author's intent. For Van Peenen, it was the missionaries who were "astute enough" to employ these artifacts in their efforts to "insinuate" the spiritual aspects of Christianity, especially with the women. Van Peenen

asserts that "the most saintly women of the island *were allowed* (watch what might be called the "passivication" of native agency) to take turns guarding, in their homes, the excess images not at the moment used at the Church" (emphasis added). Continuing a narrative of external action on a passive people, Van Peenen writes that "the priests cultivated the idea of possession and personal interest in church figures." Yet primitive agency prevails, especially for collectors of such lore. She writes: "The Chamorro people—who could never take a religion passively—were surrounding themselves with a personality which was particularly Chamorro. They made figures theirs by connecting them with the particular natural background of the island just as their ancestors before them had done with their gods. And they, like their ancestors, produced miracle legends which necessarily showed Spanish influence" (32–33).

Some forty years after Van Peenen, the late Archbishop Felixberto C. Flores—the first native Chamorro to hold such a position—gives testimony to the "necessary Spanish influence" on Chamorro dreams, specifically on Chamorro petitions:

[The beatification of Sanvitores] brings to reality a dream the people of the Mariana Islands have prayed for. These islands . . . have retained many features of Spanish Catholicism. Fiestas in honor of our patron saints for each village, public processions, rosaries and novenas are all woven into our cultural traditions. All of these are a part of the legacy that Blessed Diego and his successors brought to us—the people of the islands they converted. . . . Today the faith that Blessed Diego brought to the islands is embraced by virtually all the local population of the Marianas. (in Hezel 1985, 5)

Tale Five: Moving Motherhood

"The pretty Chamorro girls will find husbands among the thousands of American military men on Guam."

One must consider today the many "American" surnames on Guam of families whose "Chamorroneess" nobody can doubt: Underwood, McDonald, Pelkey, Dierking, Dudkiewicz, Meek, Wesley, Emsley, Johnston, Manley, Portusach, Surber, Payne, Thacker, Souder. These are only a sampling of Chamorro surnames, some which span at least two centuries of interaction or intercourse with non-Chamorro men. They take their place among other Chamorro surnames that arrived earlier and later: Chamorro surnames that are mistaken as European (for example, Pereira, Wilson, Anderson, Hoffschneider, Stein, Kaminga, Sgambelluri, Pelli-

cani, Bordallo, Millenchamp); Spanish, Mexican, or Filipino (for example, Santos, Langas, Cruz, Candaso, Perez, Delfin, Munoz, Baza, Guerrero, Benavente, Artero, Manalisay, Lizama, Barcinas, Camacho, Dela Cruz); Chinese or Japanese (for example, Ada, Ogo, Yamaguchi, Chaco, Tanaka, Shinohara, Unpingco, Quenga, Okada, Dungca, Susuico, Yamanaka, Won Pat); and Chamorro surnames that have persisted (for example, Taitano, Afaisen, Manglona, Taitague, Quitugua, Tainatongo, Aguon, Charfauros, Maanao, Terlaje, Goffigan, Finona, Pinaula, Manajane).

Local Chamorro women—patronized and stereotyped as “pretty Chamorro girls”—marry non-Chamorro men and produce Chamorro children. A powerful tradition of “motherhood,” locally called *Si Nana*, was responsible for the survival and revival of Chamorro families, or the *familia*, through what is called *custumbren Chamorro*. With the population reduced to about five percent of its former size after the Spanish–Chamorro wars (1672–1700) and the introduction of deadly diseases, primarily Chamorro women and some children survived. Chamorro women married non-Chamorro men, under the Spanish and American regimes, assumed the names of the non-Chamorros, but proceeded to produce Chamorro children. *Si Nana* is best understood, according to Chamorro scholar Laura Souder, in a play on the Chamorro term *haga*’ (1985, 5). Pronounced one way, *haga*, means blood. Pronounced differently, *haga* means daughter. Combined, *hagan haga*’ ‘blood daughter’ can be seen as the privileged term in a history of indigenous survival and revival. So, Spanish and American surnames do not mark the limits of Chamorro cultural survival. Rather, through the offices of *Si Nana*, the antes are raised in issues such as the anti-abortion debate on Guam (Diaz 1993).

Tales Six and Seven: Traveling Culture and Moving Histories

“The pretty Chamorro girls . . . will leave their Island with their husbands. Many Chamorro boys will join American Armed Forces and ‘see the world’ and settle in parts far from Guam.”

These tales are about the spawning of vital Chamorro communities far away from Guam, about the travels and travails of Chamorro culture. How many of these young couples—married to each other or not—have spawned vital Chamorro communities in Hawai‘i, San Diego, Long Beach, Fairfield, San Jose, or anywhere else in the world? In the summer of 1989 while away at school, I had the pleasure of attending what became known as the first annual Chamorro cultural festival, held in Vallejo, Cal-

ifornia. The event was sponsored by the various Chamorro clubs of northern California and the government of Guam. Subsequent fiestas in Long Beach, Fairfield, and then in San Diego in 1992 were even bigger, with much more money involved. To anybody who questions the Chamorro authenticity of the cultural festival, let me report the presence at the Fairfield festival of island politicians, in full force, with their white pants and hand-shakings two years before election time! The 1992 and 1993 festivals were so political that even the island's politicians opted not to get involved! Still unconvinced? The fiesta in Fairfield began with a Chamorro mass, celebrated by none other than distinguished visiting guest Archbishop Anthony S. Apuron. Ancient Chamorro chants echoed historically through Spanish Catholic hymns sung in a northern California county park.

The viability of Chamorro communities outside of Guam is illustrated graphically in a banner that welcomed families and friends to the first Chamorro cultural festival, held in 1989 in Vallejo, California. The banner featured the familiar slingstone-shaped Guam seal. What is interesting about this particular seal, designed by the "Bay Area Chamorro Kids," is that behind the familiar coconut tree and lateen-sail boat, one finds not the expected Two-Lovers Point—the familiar mythical landmark on Guam—but coastal points of San Francisco and Sausalito spanned by a bright orange Golden Gate Bridge. I find it usefully ironic that a mural that depicts a Chamorro proa heading in the direction of the Golden Gate Bridge stands as the emblem for a cultural event that served to finance the return of "Chamorro kids in California" to study at the University of Guam.

Children of far-flung Chamorros have been known to return to their roots. Often it is they and not those who have never left that hold the resources for reinvigorating Chamorro culture, provided they learn what has been made of Chamorro culture in the years of their absence by those cousins who never left the island. Can indigenous culture be defined by dint of its farthest point of travel (Clifford 1989)?

Unlike canonical cultural and historical sensibilities and policies, Chamorro history and culture are not about the tragic historical death of a collection of quaint native customs. Rather, Chamorro history and culture are better understood as contested sites, local spaces in Guam, and sometimes outside of Guam. The multiple origins and destinations that inhabit Chamorro culture are Chamorro by virtue of their discursive claims, that

is, by virtue of Chamorro ways of speaking as well as unique Chamorro ways of doing things. The claims, however, work through the materiality of things and ideas that are non-Chamorro in origin. Where these claims are recalled, remembered, throated, invoked, and worked upon in conscious (and unconscious) ways, there is Chamorro culture in struggle.

Struggle. Today, Chamorros continue to employ and to be deployed by a distinctive vernacular and a set of behavioral codes that struggle to maintain their hold over social and political affairs, indeed over the island itself, even as the social and political affairs of the island constitute the codes and even as these interactions occur in places far away from the island. Other nations and governments may have claimed political sovereignty over Guam, but Chamorros always maintained a level of control over their identity and their lands, always, that is, until the horrors of World War II and its aftermath, especially the past two decades. An unprecedented political and cultural predicament faces the Chamorros today: there are many non-Chamorros in the land while many Chamorros no longer have access to land. There are also more Chamorros in other lands than there are Chamorros in Guam. And there are many Chamorros, in Guam and elsewhere, who are not fluent in the Chamorro language. Chamorro survival appears especially urgent, and the stakes appear even greater today than ever before in Guam's long colonial history.

This twentieth-century cultural crisis makes it even more important to rethink the reigning ideas of culture, politics, and history in places such as Guam. In spite of (or precisely because of) nearly four hundred years of ongoing colonial domination, scholars must scrutinize the historical processes by which the natives have learned to work within and against the grain of such outsider attempts to colonize the Chamorro. We might look at the ways that the Chamorro have "localized" nonlocal ideas and practices, how they have sought to convert the dangerous into the pleasurable, the foreign into the local, the tragic into the comic. We must do so with built-in mnemonic devices to memorialize the tragic but anticipate future possibilities as well. We might look at the ways in which the Chamorros have built a kind of central political organization of resistance around, paradoxically, a polyglottal language and ambivalent discourses of Chamorro culture. In the process we will subvert reigning local conceptions of identity and community as well.

ISLAND AMNESIA AND OTHER FORMS OF REMEMBRANCE

Recall Van Peenen's final observation in her outline of why she saw Chamorro folk and lore to be doomed: "The time will come when few remember the stories told of 'Our Before Time Ancestors' and the Chamorro legends, uncollected, unwritten, will be forgotten, one by one." Earlier I alluded to the heroic epic embedded in Van Peenen's presumption to salvage a folk and its lore from certain death, using her collection and her writing as vehicles to ward off island amnesia. I conclude with a final instance of (re)collection and the possibilities of other forms of historical narration suggested therein, forms that I have tried to enact in the reconstituted tales I have spun in this essay.

In a preface to a collection of photographs taken by the Chamorro Pulitzer prizewinner Manny Crisostomo, Chamorro scholar (turned politician) Congressman Robert Underwood recalls that growing up Chamorro was "extraordinarily simple, that is, until you asked simple questions" (Crisostomo 1991, 14-15). To ask simple questions such as why we had to go to so many rosaries, fiestas, weddings, and christenings was to invite lectures from the *manamko* 'the elders' about how the person's uncle's son helped your brother's friend's sister during times of crises. To Underwood, what helped the curious youngster survive the lectures was the patience that the *manamko* exhibited in their dealings with such naive and simpleminded questions. Underwood's memories provide a sense of what might be called the "complexity of Chamorro simplicity," or, in reverse, the "simplicity of Chamorro complexity," especially as these are contained in simple family stories of politically fraught historical narratives.

By way of kekeeping score—for this is as good a way to narrate Guam's history as any other chronological accounting of discrete events along a Eurocentric calendar—let me suggest, then, not the collection of quaint lore of a primitive folk in doom, but the re-collection of island memories that wait restlessly in the ritual of everyday language of everyday island historical realities.

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Note

1 This essay deals specifically with the politics of Chamorro cultural history in Guam and not with the rest of the Northern Mariana Islands. A good counter-colonial study of Chamorro culture should pay attention to how Chamorros from Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands have been severed and governed separately. At the risk of colonial complicity, my exclusive focus on Guam stems from the limits of my own familiarity and formal study, including a general ignorance of Chamorro cultural politics in the Northern Mariana Islands. Chamorro cultural politics has traditionally been highly local and fiercely competitive. The terms of relations with others have always involved the fortification of local identities and communities, through the means and materiality furnished by encroaching colonial systems.

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Abstract

In 1945 the American folklorist Mavis Van Peenen justified her interest in collecting Chamorro folktales from the island of Guam with the lesson of an impending demise of native folk and lore. Referring to the Chamorro in the ever-present masculine pronoun, Van Peenen wrote, "He walks the precipitous ledge of past and present, with an abyss of Americanization waiting below to engulf him." The ledge consisted of over two centuries of Spanish Catholic subjugation capped by the ravages of a recent war. The "abyss" was the materiality of American liberation and benevolence, a profound set of postwar changes in terrain and psyche that she felt would surely extinguish any bid at Chamorro survival.

"Simply Chamorro" situates Van Peenen's modern-day lament within a larger canon of historical discontinuity in the Marianas, namely, the persistent tragic view of the demise of indigenous culture, especially in the island of Guam. Van Peenen's own text is remarkable, moreover, for her listing of eight reasons why the Chamorro was headed to "his" grave. Against this particular plot, "Simply Chamorro" inverts Van Peenen's tale to spin stories not of death but of troubled life and contested identities. The essay uses her eight reasons as points of departure (or arrival) for writing histories of indigenous survival, through the messiness of colonial entanglements that characterizes the politics of the Chamorro past and present, as well as constructing representations of pasts and presents in the island of Guam.